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For immediate release

SRS “ATOMS FOR PEACE” DISPLAY OPENS AT S.C. STATE MUSEUM

COLUMBIA, S.C. (Dec. 4)—A display commemorating the Savannah River Site’s contribution to the Atoms for Peace program will be available on the South Carolina State Museum’s second floor beginning this weekend. Monday is the 50th anniversary of the program.

On December 8, 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower announced the beginning of a concerted national effort to promote peaceful uses of the atom.

SRS’s most far-flung contribution to the program was plutonium-238, which is the heat source for electricity generation on deep-space probes. (Plutonium-238 cannot be used in weapons.) SRS plutonium has powered deep-space missions from the Pioneer 10 spacecraft in 1972 to the Cassini mission launched in 1997 and due to arrive at Saturn next year. (The Cassini mission is officially called the Cassini-Huygens mission, with the second name that of a probe to be sent toward the planet’s surface.) Space missions also included Apollo 11-17 and a variety of navigational, weather, and communications uses.

Voyager 1, launched in 1977, is now the most distant man-made object in the universe, being near the very edge of the solar system. It is well over 8.3 billion miles from home, far beyond Pluto’s orbit, and still gathering data—powered by SRS plutonium.

Globally, SRS has aided both nonproliferation of nuclear weapons and the development of civilian nuclear science by providing a home for spent fuel from foreign and domestic research reactors. Since the 1960s, SRS stored this fuel at its Receiving Basin for Offsite

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Fuels. This fuel has now been consolidated with others at a basin in the Site's former L-Reactor building, and the Receiving Basin for Offsite Fuels has been emptied.

SRS has manufactured other industrial and medical isotopes also, including cobalt-60, which can be used among other ways as a heat source and as a gamma-ray source for medicine and radiography, and californium-252, a neutron source for cancer treatment and industrial uses.

The display will be exhibited in the State Museum through May 2004. For further information, call Bruce Cadotte at SRS, (803) 952-9172, or the S.C. State Museum, (803) 898-4921.

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